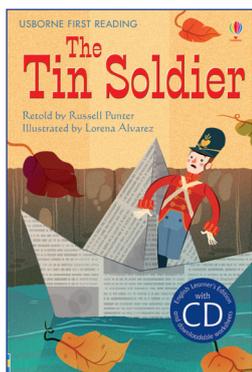


The Tin Soldier • Teacher's notes



Author: based on a story by Hans Christian Andersen

Reader level: Intermediate

Word count: 696

Lexile level: 300L

Text type: Children's classic author, fairy tale

About the story

Tom loves the tin soldiers his Grandpa gives him, even the one with a missing leg. He plays with them all day, but at night when he's asleep it's the toys' turn to play. The one-legged soldier catches sight of a paper ballerina dancing on one leg and decides to marry her, inspiring jealousy in the jack-in-the-box. When the soldier is left on the window sill one day, the jack-in-the-box blows him off into the street.

A long and dangerous journey follows. The tin soldier is placed in a paper boat by two boys, floated along the gutter, swept down a drain and through a stinky sewer into a river where he's eaten by a fish. Luckily that's not where the story ends. A man catches the fish and Tom's Grandpa buys it, discovers the soldier and returns him to Tom. That night, the toys celebrate the lost soldier's return – all except for the jack-in-the-box, who is so furious that he breaks a spring and never works again. In a revision of Andersen's tragic ending, the tin soldier and ballerina get married and invite the toys to a party.

About the author

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875) was born in Odense, Denmark, the son of a shoemaker. At the age of 14 he moved to the capital city, Copenhagen, hoping to become an actor or a dancer. When he didn't succeed at either, he went back to school, then tried his hand at writing. Initially it was his adult novels and poetry that received the most attention, but he is now world famous for his spellbinding fairy tales, including *The Emperor and the Nightingale* which is also available as an Usborne English Learner's Edition.

Key words

Your students might not be familiar with some of these words, which are important in the story.

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| tin | p27 drain | p37 tasty |
| p3 attention | ahead | p38 swallowed |
| p4 packed | p28 sewer | gulp |
| p8 stuck | p29 tunnel | p39 tummy |
| p9 pile | p30 penny | forever |
| p10 gazing | p31 stinky | p42 unwrapped |
| p11 ballerina | p33 noticed | p45 spring |
| p13 grumpy | daylight | |
| jack-in-the-box | whooshed | |
| p14 ignored | p35 leaking | |
| p15 fumed | | |
| p20 landed | | |
| p23 sailor | | |
| p24 gutter | | |



Key phrases

| | |
|-----|------------------------------|
| p3 | Quick, march! |
| p6 | All clear! |
| p9 | to join in |
| p13 | Keep your eyes to yourself |
| p17 | so long |
| p18 | to take a deep breath |
| p23 | to turn [something] into |
| p36 | to sink like a stone |
| p39 | his luck was about to change |
| p40 | what a beauty |
| p43 | Welcome home! |
| p45 | hopping mad |

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Before reading

Ask the class which toys they liked best when they were younger. Make a list of all the different toys on the board; you could group them into TRADITIONAL and MODERN. If students don't suggest them, add toy soldiers and jack-in-the-box (students may not know the English name) to the traditional group.

Do the students know any stories where toys come alive? They might have seen *Toy Story* or know versions of *Pinocchio* or *Winnie the Pooh* or *The Nutcracker*, for example. When do the toys tend to come alive – at what time of day? Do the humans realize what's going on?

Now ask the class if they know who Hans Christian Andersen was. [A Danish author, famous for his collected fairy tales.] Can anyone name one of his stories? *The Emperor's New Clothes*, *The Little Mermaid* and *The Snow Queen* are perhaps the best known. Show students the cover of *The Tin Soldier* and explain that it's based on another Andersen fairy tale, called *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*.

Reading or listening

You can listen to the story on CD or read it aloud to the students, take turns to read or read together silently. Each double page spread in the book is one track on the CD, so that you can pause between tracks or repeat tracks if your students need it. The first reading is in a British English accent, and it is followed by an American English reading. The words are exactly the same. After the story, there is a short selection of key phrases that can be used for pronunciation practice.

During reading: you might like to ask some of these questions.

- | | | | |
|---------|---|-----|--|
| p3 | What games does Tom play with his soldiers? What is he pretending to be? | p29 | What would happen to him? [He'd sink.] |
| pp6-7 | Why do Tom's toys wait until he's asleep before they come out to play? | p30 | How do you think the soldier is feeling? |
| p12 | Why might the soldier think the ballerina is perfect for him? [She dances on one leg.] | p30 | How would you describe the rat? |
| p17 | Why does the jack-in-the-box want to get rid of the tin soldier? | p32 | Do you think the tin soldier will ever see the ballerina again? |
| p23 | Why do the boys send him off in a boat. Are they being cruel? Or are they simply having fun with a new toy? | p37 | What do you think will happen next? |
| pp26-27 | Why doesn't the tin soldier just jump out? | p39 | Do you know any other stories where a main character is swallowed by a fish? [Pinocchio, Jonah and the Whale...] |
| | | p43 | How do you think the tin soldier feels now? What about Grandpa? And Tom? |
| | | p45 | Do you feel sorry for the jack-in-the-box? |

After reading

Remind the students that the original Tin Soldier story, by Hans Christian Andersen, was called *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*. 'Steadfast' is an old-fashioned word meaning steady, loyal, unchanging. In what way is the Tin Soldier steadfast? [He's made of metal for a start, and see how upright he is on the paper boat. He doesn't forget his ballerina doll, and finds his way back to her against the odds.]

Page 48 tells you about the original, sad ending to the story. Do students prefer the happy ending?

Think about the noisy toy party at the end of the story. What would it be like? What do students think all the different toys might do to celebrate? You could ask them to choose a toy character and write a description of the party as a follow-up.

